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***GOVERNOR CALLS FOR FUNDING TO FIGHT CATASTROPHIC
WILDFIRES***

Napolitano testimony before U.S. House of Representatives on FLAME Act

PHOENIX – Governor Janet Napolitano today told the U.S. House of Representatives’ Natural Resources Committee that Congress should pass legislation to provide separate federal funding for catastrophic wildfire response and suppression.

“Large fires that used to burn hundreds of acres have been supplanted with mega-fires that burn tens of thousands of acres – sometimes in a single afternoon,” said Governor Napolitano. “It is time to face reality and address the funding requirements to suppress these catastrophic fires.”

The Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement Act (the “FLAME” Act) would help relieve the burden on the U.S. Forest Service’s already tight budget and the drain on wildfire prevention funding by creating a permanent fund for fighting the most catastrophic blazes.

“Arizona’s forests – and forests throughout the West – are now in the midst of a ‘perfect storm,’” explained the Governor. “Decades of fuel accumulations and acres of beetle-killed timber, the rapid expansion of wildland/urban interface, and the overarching presence of drought and climate change have now combined to dramatically increase the numbers and size of mega-fires.”

She emphasized that federal funding to fight catastrophic wildland fires must not come at the expense of fire prevention programs such as hazardous fuels treatment. The Governor called on Congress to pass the FLAME Act to “ensure that funding is not swept from vital restoration and prevention activities.”

The Governor cautioned that: “This is an urgent issue for Arizona and the West, where we have seen increased catastrophic wildland fire activity over the last decade and where most forests are on federal land. There is no time to waste.”

In the 1990s, wildfires suppression costs comprised 20 percent of the overall Forest Service budget. Today, with more catastrophic wildfires – suppression efforts consume more than half of the Forest Service budget. Recent fire seasons have cost upwards of one billion dollars, compared to \$200 million seasons in the ‘90s.

A copy of the Governor’s testimony is attached. For more information about the Office of the Governor, please visit www.azgovernor.gov.